



# LIFELINK

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## MINDING YOUR HEALTH

*Getting active is the key to staying mentally and physically fit*

Each May, America observes [Mental Health Month](#), or [National Mental Health Awareness Month](#), to promote understanding of the physical and psychological benefits associated with maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Health isn't merely the absence of a particular disease or disorder, and it's not just a physical state. There is an unbreakable link between a healthy mind and overall wellness, adding truth to the old cliché "you only look as good as you feel." The theme of this year's Mental Health Month is "Minding Your Health," encouraging everyone to assess their daily habits and coping strategies to take steps toward a healthy lifestyle.

A 2012 [American Psychological Association report](#) found that nearly seven in 10 Americans experience physical symptoms of stress including anger, fatigue, feeling overwhelmed, and disrupted sleeping habits. Additionally, the report states that while 60% of Americans have attempted to reduce their stress, only 37% believe they did so successfully. That's where the benefits of healthy and active living come into play. Physical activity, proper nutrition, social connectedness, adequate sleep and responsible choices regarding alcohol-use not only yield physical benefits, but can help promote recovery from stress and prevent it from leading to more serious conditions.

Stress is linked to a multitude of chronic health problems such as high blood pressure, heart disease, obesity and more. Exercise is one way to help beat the effects of stress while promoting long-term physical and mental health. Whether you're feeling overwhelmed by your increasing workload or agitated after long hours on the job, getting physically active can boost your mood and energy-level while improving overall wellness. Aerobic exercise, continuous and intense activity that stimulates oxygen intake and blood circulation, helps counter the effects of stress on your mind and body. Next time you've had a tough day, go for a run around the deck with a few shipmates, or ride your bike around base. The sense of calm and decrease in tension you may feel is the result of your body regulating stress hormones and releasing endorphins (natural stress-busters), enabled by the increased circulation from your aerobic adventure. Resistance training, a form of anaerobic exercise, builds muscular strength and bone density, and boosts metabolism. By adding it to your regimen, you're promoting long-term health—combatting obesity, heart disease and more—while building physical strength and a stronger mind.

Though exercise can help you unwind during stressful times, make it a daily habit to maximize mental and physical health benefits. You don't need an elaborate gym to get active! Check out the latest tips from [Navy Physical Readiness](#) and the [Active Living](#) resources from Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center. Making small changes to your routines, like a short workout during lunchtime, will get you on the right track staying mentally and physically fit.



Want to learn more about exercise and stress navigation? Check out [this post](#) on [NavyNavStress.com](#).

### NEWS YOU CAN USE

Suicide Prevention Video  
[All Hands Update](#)

Nothing Changes if I Don't Change  
[MentalHealth.Gov](#)

Vets 4 Warriors Call Center  
Available 24/7 for You and Your Family  
[Warrior Care Blog](#)

Staying Fit Underway  
[All Hands Magazine](#)

Spring Into Financial Success, Pt. 1  
[NavyNavStress](#)

# LIFELINK NEWSLETTER

## LIFELINK SPOTLIGHT

### *“Like Minded Warriors” Group of Navy SEALs inspire hope among children with cancer*

A sense of community and hope are essential to building resilience and pressing on through adversity, and both can be found in unlikely sources. To that end, May's LifeLink spotlights a story of "like-minded warriors"—a group of active duty and former Navy SEALs who are sharing their strength with children undergoing vigorous treatment for cancer.

In a [recent National Public Radio \(NPR\) feature](#), combat veteran Adam LaReau shares his inspiring story about founding a non-profit organization that teams the young warriors and veteran mentors together for indoor rock climbing events. The majority of the vets volunteering in the program have overcome extreme physical and emotional challenges after being severely injured at war. All of them have developed the unparalleled inner and outer strength it takes to thrive as a member of one of our military's most elite teams, and recover from unforeseen tests of courage.

The kids in the program, ages 9-13, are warriors in their own right, battling aggressive cancers and grueling treatments that cause physical and emotional setbacks. While pushing themselves on the rock climbing walls, the children bond with heroes who understand what it takes to fight for survival and recovery, gaining the motivation and support to keep going. The physical challenges as the rock climbing walls become tougher, coupled with encouragement from the SEALs, give the children a boost in self-confidence and mental strength to endure their fight with cancer. The program is rewarding for the SEALs as well. “To come together for something like this where we’re actually celebrating something and...to be around so many positive people for a positive cause is pretty powerful,” one SEAL tells NPR. Read more of this story of hope, resilience and perseverance [here](#). When we help others, we help ourselves.

*The LifeLink Spotlight recognizes a proactive Sailor, command, or member of the Navy community that has gone above and beyond to help others thrive, not just survive. Whether sharing an inspiring personal testimony, organizing efforts to promote wellness and resilience, or taking ACTions that save a life, spotlight awardees offer hope and build a sense of community—protective factors against suicide and other destructive behaviors. Send your nominations to [suicideprevention@navy.mil](mailto:suicideprevention@navy.mil).*

## RESILIENCE CORNER

### *Laughter is Good Medicine for Stress Relief*

*“Through humor, you can soften some of the worst blows that life delivers. And once you find laughter, no matter how painful your situation might be, you can survive it.”*

*—Bill Cosby*



Navy Operational Stress Control and Suicide Prevention Programs use a variety of tools and resources to promote healthy stress navigation. One important tool in our toolbox, and perhaps the most overlooked, is laughter.

Finding the humor in stressful situations can help us ease tension, but that's not where [laughter's stress navigation benefits](#) end. A good laugh can actually affect your body's chemical processes. Think about it—when you laugh, you're breathing in more oxygen. That increased oxygen stimulates your heart and lungs, helping the brain release endorphins; the feel-good hormones that not only boost your mood, but can aid in pain-relief as well. Laughter can also help alleviate some of the physical signs of stress, like muscle tension, by stimulating circulation and regulating your body's stress responses, promoting relaxation.

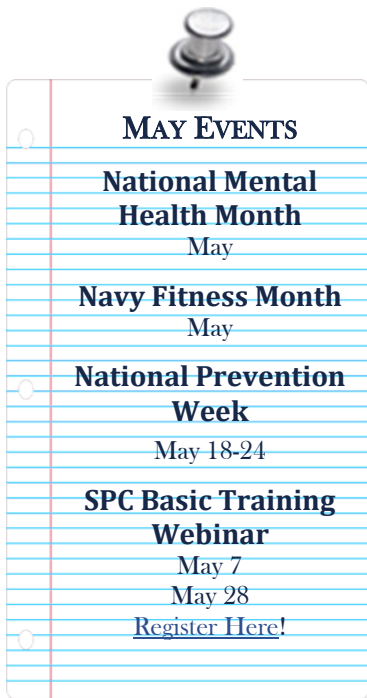
While short-term responses to stress may help us recover faster, long-term improvements to our health help us build resilience. Over time, laughter can boost the immune system and decrease stress hormone levels (cortisol and epinephrine), ultimately keeping us happier and healthier.

Feel like there isn't much to laugh about? Sometimes watching your favorite sitcom on TV, renting a funny movie, or reading your favorite military cartoon panel can do the trick (check out [NavyNavStress.com's "Cartoon" category](#)). Spending time with friends who make you smile has benefits as well—sharing a laugh together may make you feel even better by reminding you that you have others who you can count on for support.

Allow yourself to find a lighter perspective in your darkest moments and start being mindful of the things that make you smile—your kids, looking at a funny old photo of yourself, listening to a recording of your favorite comedian, etc. Take a few deep breaths and try to find the humor in your stress. You may even laugh at yourself.

While laughter is good medicine for stress relief, it's important to know [when to take stress seriously](#). A shipmate who jokes about suicide may be showing signs of a more serious crisis that could require professional attention. Don't hesitate to [ACT \(Ask Care Treat\)](#). Showing your support may help them return to a positive outlook on life and give you both something to smile about.

# LIFELINK NEWSLETTER



## MAY 18–24 IS NATIONAL PREVENTION WEEK!

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration's (SAMHSA) "[National Prevention Week](#)" is right around the corner. Observed from May 18 - 24, this annual public health initiative is aimed at increasing awareness of mental health issues and substance abuse issues through community-centered approaches. While this week is used to promote public awareness and support, National Prevention Week was developed based on the concept that "effective prevention... requires consistent action." It's an all hands evolution, all of the time. This is a great opportunity for you, your shipmates and families to tie in the many ways we can come together to support each other and prevent destructive behavior, engaging the theme "Our Lives. Our Health. Our Future." Each day, SAMHSA will highlight a new topic per the following calendar:

May 18: *Prevention and Cessation of Tobacco Use*

May 19: *Prevention of Underage Drinking*

May 20: *Prevention of Prescription Drug Abuse and Marijuana Use*

May 21: *Prevention of Alcohol Abuse*

May 22: *Prevention of Suicide*

May 23: *Promotion of Mental Health*

Visit [SAMHSA](#) online for National Prevention

Week engagement ideas. You could organize a health fair supporting the daily topics or promote prevention awareness on your command's Facebook page using [SAMHSA's messages](#). Even individual action promotes solidarity. Take the [Prevention Pledge](#) on Facebook and encourage your shipmates to do the same. Templates are also available online for the "[I Choose](#)" project—a great opportunity for individual or group engagement. Just take a photo of yourself or a group of your shipmates holding up an "I Choose" sign personalized with your message promoting healthy choices to prevent destructive behavior.

Navy's 21st Century Sailor Programs have myriad resources to support your local efforts. Visit [Navy Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention](#), [Navy Suicide Prevention](#), and [Navy Operational Stress Control](#) online for downloadable tools and information. For more resources, including [Tobacco Cessation](#) information, visit Navy & Marine Corps Public Health Center's [Health Promotion and Wellness site](#).



Watch the National Prevention Week video

Contact Navy Suicide Prevention

[Email Us](#) | [Website](#)

Follow Operational Stress

Control Online...



## MORE NEWS YOU CAN USE

Spring into Financial Success Pt. 2 [NavyNavStress](#)

Preventing Suicide: Following up After the Crisis [SAMHSA](#)

"STOP" What You are Doing and Read This [HPRC Online](#)

The Veterans Crisis Line Offers Support 24/7 [VFW.org](#)

Are You There, Chaps? [All Hands Magazine](#)

Reduce Stress When you PCS [Navy.mil](#)

What an Ombudsman can do for You [NIOCP Blog](#)

A 30-day Challenge for Families [HPRC Online](#)

Sponsorship Key Component to Sailor Success [Navy.mil](#)

The Costly Gift [All Hands Magazine](#)

First Lady Announcing Pledges for Veterans, Families [Stars and Stripes](#)